



EU Position Paper: Guiding Principles on Ireland/Northern Ireland

This short paper published by the European Commission does not put forward specific solutions for the Irish border. It places the onus to the UK to propose solutions to the challenges created by the decisions to leave the customs union and the single market.

The paper states that it is the UK's responsibility to ensure that its approach to the challenges of the Irish border takes into account and protects the very specific and interwoven political, economic, security, societal and agricultural context and frameworks on the island of Ireland.

The following principles have been highlighted as the centrepiece of discussions when considering the implications of Brexit for Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Good Friday Agreement and the Peace Process.

It is proposed that the European Union and the United Kingdom, as a co-guarantor with Ireland of the Good Friday Agreement, should continue to support peace, stability and reconciliation on the island of Ireland.

It is recognised that the gains and benefits of peace which have been achieved through the Good Friday Agreement, and facilitated and supported by the European Union, should continue to be protected and strengthened.

The following elements are designed to underpin these principles:

(1) The Good Friday Agreement established interlocking political institutions which reflect the totality of the relationships on the islands of Great Britain and Ireland. The institutions, which provide frameworks for cooperation between both parts of the island e.g. Inter-Trade Ireland and between Ireland and Great Britain, will need to continue to operate effectively.

(2) Ensuring the avoidance of a hard border on the island of Ireland is central to protecting the gains of the Peace Process underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement. In view of the unique circumstances, flexible and imaginative solutions will be required to avoid a hard border, including any physical border infrastructure. This must be achieved in a way which ensures that Ireland's place within the Internal Market and Customs Union is unaffected.

(3) North South cooperation between Ireland and Northern Ireland is a central part of the Good Friday Agreement and should be protected across all of the relevant sectors. This cooperation is embedded in the common framework of European Union law policies.

(4) The Good Friday Agreement includes provisions on Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity, for which EU law and practice has provided a supporting framework in

Northern Ireland and across the island. The Good Friday Agreement requires equivalent standards of protection of rights in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom should ensure that no diminution of rights is caused by the United Kingdom's departure from the EU.

(5) As regards citizenship, full account should be taken of the fact that Irish citizens residing in Northern Ireland will continue to enjoy rights as EU citizens. To this end, the Withdrawal Agreement should respect and be without prejudice to the rights, opportunities and identity that come with European Union citizenship for the people of Northern Ireland who choose to assert their right to Irish citizenship.

(6) The Union has provided significant support to the Peace Process including through programmes such as PEACE and INTERREG. The United Kingdom and the Union need to honour their commitments under the current Multi-annual Financial Framework and examine how to ensure implementation in line with applicable European Union rules, including as regards the role and location of the Special European Union Programmes Body.

Common Travel Area (CTA)

The CTA is a long-standing arrangement between Ireland and the United Kingdom, predating either country's accession to the EU, which enables Irish and British citizens to travel and reside in either jurisdiction without restriction and provides for associated rights and privileges in both jurisdictions.

In relation to the CTA, the EU expects the following principles to be adhered to following Brexit:

(1) The continued operation of the Common Travel Area is fundamental to facilitating the interaction of people in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, it underpins the peace process and the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, in particular the citizenship and identity provisions, by facilitating the movement of people across the island of Ireland.

(2) Continuation of the Common Travel Area arrangements, in conformity with European Union law, should be recognised. The United Kingdom has expressed its readiness to ensure that the Common Travel Area can continue to operate without compromising Ireland's ability to honour its obligations as a European Union Member State, including in relation to free movement for European Economic Area nationals to and from Ireland.

Full Paper: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/guiding-principles-dialogue-ei-ni_en.pdf